

* I-II: INSIGHT

- I. **The book of Acts reveals that in the move of the Lord there is only one divine stream of the Lord's work and that we need to keep ourselves in this stream:**
- A. The divine stream, which has been flowing throughout the generations, is uniquely one; since there is only one divine stream and since the flow is uniquely one, we need to keep ourselves in this one flow—1 John 1:3; Rev. 22:1.
 - B. Where the divine stream flows, we have the life of God, the fellowship of the Body, the testimony of Jesus, and the work of God—Gen. 2:10-14; Psa. 36:8-9; 46:4a; John 7:37-39; Rev. 22:1.
 - C. When we give the Lord the preeminence in our entire being, taking Him as our first love, He becomes the divine stream to us, flowing within us and out of us as the first works; the first works are works that are motivated by, issue from, and express the Lord as our first love; only works that are motivated by the first love are gold, silver, and precious stones—Rev. 22:1; 2:4-5; Col. 1:18; 1 Cor. 2:9; 3:12.
 - D. The flowing of the divine life, which started on the day of Pentecost and has been flowing throughout all generations to this day, is just one stream for God's goal to build up the church for His corporate expression—Matt. 16:18; cf. Ezek. 47:1-12.
- II. **The basic principle of the church is that it is eternal and universal, so the church must constantly spread on the earth; the growth of the church and the building up of the church are based on spreading—Acts 1:8; 8:1; 9:31:**
- A. The spreading of the church is brought about by the growth in the Lord's life and the flowing out of the Lord's life, the overflow of life—Eph. 4:16; John 7:37-39; Acts 2:42, 46-47; 5:20; 6:4, 7; 12:24; 19:20.
 - B. When the church begins to spread, erroneous concepts are shattered, regardless of whether the concepts are regional, racial, or mutually discriminatory; it is through spreading that all our close-mindedness is eliminated—cf. 1 Cor. 12:24; Col. 3:10-11.
 - C. Acts 8 shows that the first step in the church's spread was to Samaria, and the second step was to Ethiopia, to Africa (vv. 26-39); this shows that we must preach the gospel to every tribe and tongue and people and nation because the church is universal and needs to spread—Acts. 8:1-39; Rev. 5:9-10; 7:9.
 - D. Acts 9 shows God's choosing of Saul (later Paul), which is against the human concept; our narrow, erroneous human concept needs to be broken and shattered through the spreading of the church; we must believe that a person can be persecuting the church one hour and preaching the gospel the next hour—Acts. 9:10-22.
 - E. Acts 10 indicates that the Lord's evangelistic move on earth is under His administration on the throne in heaven and that the gospel needs to be spread to the four corners of the inhabited earth to collect all kinds of unclean (sinful) people, cleansing them with the redeeming blood of Christ and washing them with the renewing Holy Spirit—Acts. 10:11-12, 15, 28; cf. Heb. 8:1; Acts 7:56.
 - F. Acts 13 reveals that in the church in Antioch, the five prophets and teachers who were ministering to the Lord were composed of Jews and Gentiles, each having a different background, education, and status; this indicates that the church is composed of all races and classes of people regardless of their background, and that the spiritual gifts and functions given to the members of the Body of Christ are not based on their natural status—Acts. 13:1; 4:36; Rom. 16:21; Luke 9:7-9; Acts 22:3:
 - Through these five faithful and seeking members of the Body of Christ, the Lord took a great step to set apart Barnabas and Saul for His work and move to spread the gospel of His kingdom to the Gentile world.
 - It was absolutely a move by the Spirit, in the Spirit, and with the Spirit through the coordination of the faithful and seeking members of the Body of Christ on the earth with the Head in the heavens—Acts. 13:1-4a.

II. (Cont.)

- G. On the apostle Paul's first trip to spread the gospel, he went to Cyprus and then to Asia Minor to establish many local churches—Acts. 13:4b—14:28; Rev. 1:4.
- H. After Paul separated from Barnabas, he went out on his second ministry journey to Europe (Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth, and returning through Ephesus back to Antioch)—Acts 15:35-40; 16:6—18:22.
- I. Paul's third journey was from Antioch to Galatia, Phrygia, Ephesus, Macedonia, and Greece to Jerusalem—Acts. 18:23—21:17.
- J. Paul's fourth journey was from Caesarea to Rome—Acts. 27:1—28:31.

* III-IV: PRACTICE

III. **We must receive the Lord's mercy to be saved from Satan's schemes to frustrate the spreading and building up of the church, and we must keep ourselves in the flow of the age for the building up of His Body**—cf. Heb. 4:16; Lam. 3:22-25:

- A. We must be saved from outward and dead ordinances, human opinions, and the self with its old concepts; whoever receives mercy from the Lord will be saved in these matters; the degree to which we are saved is the degree to which the church can be built up—Rom. 5:10; Phil. 1:19-21a; 2:12-16; Acts 15:1-12; Gal. 2:21; 5:1; 2:4.
- B. We must learn from the lesson of Peter to be saved from the veils of our religious traditions and old background so that we may see and live under the vision of God's eternal economy to hold the truth of the gospel—Acts 10:9-16; Gal. 2:11-14.
- C. We must learn from the lesson of Barnabas to be saved from human opinions and natural relationships—disputes that arise among the co-workers because of personal relationships are terrible; remember this well!—Acts 13:13; 15:35-40; Col. 4:10.
- D. We must learn from the lesson of Apollos to be saved from a ministry that lacks a complete revelation of God's New Testament economy and from not being fully one with the ministry of the age—Acts 18:24—19:2; 1 Cor. 1:12; 16:10-12.
- E. We must learn from the lesson of Paul in Acts 16:6-12; these verses indicate the problem of workers coming to a place and tending to become set and settled down, not wanting to move; old relationships, old affections, old inclinations, and old concepts keep us from following the inner leading of the indwelling Spirit:
 - The Holy Spirit forbade Paul and his co-workers, and the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them; the Holy Spirit's forbidding separates us, sanctifies us, and the Spirit of Jesus either allows us or does not allow us—Acts. 16:6-7.
 - The Holy Spirit says no to sanctify us, and the Spirit of Jesus says go to send us out in the humanity of Jesus to accomplish the will of God under the cross.
- F. We must learn from the lesson of Paul to practice the Body life and to take the word of the Spirit through the members of the Body, obeying it as a word from the Head—Acts. 20:23; 21:4,7-8, 11-14.
- G. We must learn from the mistake of James and the devastating mixture of the church in Jerusalem—Acts. 21:18-21; Matt. 22:7; 24:1-2:
 - Jeremiah spoke of the law of life that could be written upon our hearts, and Paul spoke of the law of the Spirit of life in our spirit, but James treasured and uplifted the law of letters—Jer. 31:31-34; Rom. 8:2, 4, 6; Acts 21:20.
 - Paul spoke of being crucified with Christ and being conformed to the death of Christ by the power of Christ's resurrection; it is this life that produces the Body life that consummates in the New Jerusalem—Gal. 2:20; Phil. 3:10; Matt. 16:24.
 - James boasted that there were myriads of believing Jews in the church in Jerusalem who were zealous for the law, but Paul was zealous to gain Christ, be found in Christ, know Christ, lay hold of Christ, pursue Christ, and uplift Christ for the fullest enjoyment of Christ—Acts 21:20; Phil. 3:6-14; Col. 1:18b.

III. (Cont.)

- H. We must learn from the lesson of Paul to be saved from the mixing of Judaic practices with God's New Testament economy; this mixing is not only erroneous but also abominable in the eyes of God—Acts 21:18-27, 31, 36; Heb. 10:29.
- I. We must learn from the lesson of Paul's appealing to Caesar, utilizing his Roman citizenship to save himself from his persecutors so that he might fulfill the course of his ministry—Acts 22:25-29; 23:10-11; 25:8-12; 26:32:
 - Paul was willing to sacrifice his life for the Lord, but he still endeavored to live longer so that he might carry out the Lord's ministry as much as possible—Acts. 20:24.
 - God in His sovereignty rescued Paul so that He might separate him from all the dangerous situations and entrapments and sent him to a quiet prison; this was to afford him a quiet environment and give him time, whether in Caesarea or in Rome, that through his last Epistles he might release exhaustively to the church throughout the generations the revelation of the mystery of God's New Testament economy that he received from the Lord—Acts. 24:27; 28:16, 23, 30.
 - The benefit and profit that the church throughout the generations has received from these Epistles will take eternity to measure (see 25:11, footnote 1).

IV. All of us should follow the pattern of the apostle Paul to do the same one work universally for the unique Body—1 Cor. 3:12; 15:58; 16:10; Eph. 4:11-16:

- A. The work in the Lord's recovery is for the building up of the local churches unto the building up of the universal Body of Christ—Eph. 2:21-22; 1 Cor. 16:10.
- B. Today there are four kinds of workers:
 - The first kind is the co-workers who match the need of the ministry of God in the present age; this is a small group of people who have been dealt with by the Lord and who are in one accord.
 - The second kind is the younger co-workers; they are willing to receive direction and to come under the coordination of the older co-workers, and they are willing to follow and to learn in humility.
 - The third kind is those who are unwilling to submit to the senior co-workers and who do not belong to the denominations, but who are happy to remain in fellowship with us.
 - The fourth kind is the preachers and free evangelists among the denominations.
- C. What we need today are the first and second kind of co-workers; concerning the third and fourth kind of workers, we can only let them choose their own pathway; with some people God has not assigned them to take the same way as we do, and we dare not say anything to them.
- D. Whatever the situation may be, we are here to do the work that God has committed to us; we cannot interfere with others' work, and we are not here tearing down others' work.

- I. The book of Acts reveals that in the move of the Lord there is only one divine stream of the Lord's work and that we need to keep ourselves in this stream**
- The only one divine stream is unique and has been flowing throughout the generations, we need to keep ourselves in this one flow. Where the divine stream flows, we have the life of God, the fellowship of the Body, the testimony of Jesus, and the work of God. When we give the Lord the preeminence in our entire being, taking Him as our first love, He becomes the divine stream flowing within and out of us as the first works, works that are motivated by, issue from, and express the Lord as our first love and are gold, silver, and precious stones. This one divine stream, the flowing of the divine life, started on the day of Pentecost and has been flowing to this day, is just one stream for God's goal to build up the church for His corporate expression. [1 John 1:3] *That which we have seen and heard we report also to you that you also may have fellowship with us, and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.* [Rev. 22:1] *And he showed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb in the middle of its street.*
- II. The basic principle of the church is that it is eternal and universal, so the church must constantly spread on the earth; the growth of the church and the building up of the church are based on spreading**
- The spreading of the church is brought about by the growth in the Lord's life and the flowing out of the Lord's life, the overflow of life. When the church begins to spread, erroneous concepts, regional/ racial discriminations, and all our close-mindedness are eliminated. The church is eternal and universal and needs to start spreading to Samaria, Ethiopia, Africa and on; preaching the gospel to every tribe and tongue and people and nation. God's choosing Paul to spread the church is against our narrow, erroneous human concept that needs to be shattered through the spreading of the church. The Lord's administration is governing His evangelistic move on earth and the spreading of the gospel to the four corners of the inhabited earth, to redeem unclean (sinful) people with the blood of Christ and wash them with the renewing Holy Spirit. The church is composed of all races and classes of people regardless of their background and the spiritual gifts and functions given to the members of the Body of Christ was absolutely a move by the Spirit, in the Spirit, and with the Spirit through the coordination of the faithful and seeking members of the Body of Christ on the earth with the Head in the heavens. [Acts. 1:8] *But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth.* [Acts. 8:1] *...And there occurred in that day a great persecution against the church which was in Jerusalem; and all were scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.* [Acts. 9:15] *But the Lord said to him, Go, for this man is a chosen vessel to Me, to bear My name before both the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel.* [Acts. 10:45] *And the believers who were of the circumcision, as many as had accompanied Peter, were amazed, because on the Gentiles also the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out.*
- III. We must receive the Lord's mercy to be saved from Satan's schemes to frustrate the spreading and building up of the church, and we must keep ourselves in the flow of the age for the building up of His Body**
- We must learn the lessons from the disciples in Acts and to receive the Lord's mercy to be saved from Satan's schemes that frustrate the spreading and building up of the church, keeping ourselves from: ① outward and dead ordinances, human opinions, and the self with its old concepts which hinders the building up of the church; ② the veils of our religious traditions and old background so that we may see and live God's vision of eternal economy and hold the truth of the gospel; ③ human opinions and natural relationships to avoid disputes among co-workers; ④ a partial ministry that lacks a complete revelation of God's New Testament economy; ⑤ becoming set and settled down in old places/ relationships/ affections/ concepts instead of following the inner leading of the indwelling Spirit; ⑥ not practicing the Body life and disobeying the word of the Spirit, the word from the Head, through the members of the Body; ⑦ treasuring and uplifting the law of letters instead of the law of life that is in our spirit and is written upon our hearts; from living by self-cultivation instead of living Christ by self-denial to produce the Body life that consummates in the New Jerusalem; from being zealous for the law instead of being zealous and enjoying Christ to the fullest; ⑧ the mixing of Judaic, religious, practices with God's New Testament economy which is abominable in the eyes of God; ⑨ persecutions rightfully for carrying out the Lord's ministry as much as possible. [Acts. 16:6-7] *And they passed through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. And when they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, yet the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them.* [Rom. 8:2] *For the law of the Spirit of life has freed me in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and of death.* [Gal. 2:20] *...and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.*
- IV. All of us should follow the pattern of the apostle Paul to do the same one work universally for the unique Body**
- The work in the Lord's recovery is for the building up of the local churches unto the building up of the universal Body of Christ. Today there are four kinds of workers: ① a small group of co-workers who have been dealt with by the Lord and are in one accord to match the need of the ministry of God in the present age; ② the younger co-workers who are willing to learn in humility and follow direction under the coordination of the older co-workers; ③ those in fellowship with us and do not belong to the denominations, but are unwilling to submit to the senior co-workers; ④ the preachers and free evangelists among the denominations. What we need today are the first and second kind of co-workers to do the work that God has committed to us in all situations, we cannot interfere with nor tear down others' work.

...there are some believers who, although they have had this stream flowing into them, have not kept themselves within its flow. They have the life of the Triune God within them, but they are not keeping themselves in the flowing of this life. Many times you are conscious that you are out of the flowing of this stream. Then, sometimes you know that you are in its flowing. What have you to do then? It is really quite simple. You just have to keep yourself in the flowing of the stream. Whenever you feel that the flowing of the stream within you is cut off, you must turn to the Lord immediately to seek the reason. Why has the stream within you stopped flowing? You must discover the reason and deal with the Lord about it until the flowing is recovered. Wherever you are going and whatever you are about to do, if there is the sense that the flowing of the stream will be stopped by proceeding in that matter, then you must stop. Stop in order to maintain the flowing. To maintain the flowing you must refrain from all those activities which are not of the Lord, that is, which are not of the flowing of the stream within you.

<Excerpts from "The Devine Stream">

...God works along the flowing of the stream of the divine life... By flowing God works; by flowing God preaches His Gospel; by flowing God brings people to be saved. There is a stream which we could call the stream or the current of the work. Where it flows, there is the work of God.

...Throughout the whole history of the Church there has ever been and still is such a divine stream.

...May we remember this in our prayers, and may we be ready to go along with the Lord that this stream may have a free way to flow without any hindrance in us. We must be faithful to the flowing of this stream of the divine life, of the fellowship of the Body, of the testimony of the Lord Jesus, and of the work of God.

...What we must do today is just go along with the stream, just subject ourselves to the current of the work of the Holy Spirit.

< Excerpts from "The Devine Stream">